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PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHAS #0018/01 0051424
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051424Z JAN 09 ZDS (CORRECTED COPY - PARA MARKING)
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6828
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 9158
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2996
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0825
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1815
RUEHNN/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6621
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000018

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA, S/CT, DS/ICI/CI, NEA/EX AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/05/2019

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [KMSG](#) [PREL](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGIERS GAZA PROTESTS GAIN MOMENTUM

REF: A. 08 ALGIERS 1339

[1](#)B. 08 ALGIERS 1340

[1](#)C. 08 ALGIERS 1350

[1](#)D. ALGIERS 12

ALGIERS 00000018 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: DCM Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Demonstrations of Algerian popular anger over Israeli actions in Gaza and support for the Palestinian people have increased in the past several days. Since much of the frustration is directed at the Algerian regime for its perceived impotence in the face of the Palestinian crisis, police have been deployed to potential flashpoints around the city in order to quell any spontaneous public demonstrations within Algiers. Demonstrations in Algeria require government authorization, which is rarely given. Current protests in support of Gaza are thus illegal gatherings that are tightly controlled by a government seeking to balance the need to let off popular steam with a desire to avoid destabilizing the status quo. Secular French-educated Algerians have found themselves standing alongside conservative Islamic Algerians who insist that solidarity for Gaza means "speaking Arabic" and turning their back on French language and culture. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Popular expressions of frustration have grown in recent days, culminating in a large rally near the May 1st square planned for the afternoon of January 5 and led by the political parties of the ruling coalition. On January 4, a group of 150 demonstrators endured pouring rain to protest in the heart of Algiers between Place Audin and the Central Post Office. The demonstration had been launched at the University of Algiers, but police confined the protestors to the area below Place Audin, thwarting their expressed desire to march uphill towards the U.S. and Egyptian embassies. Embassy local staff reported that the protests have at least temporarily united conflicted Francophone Algerians with their conservative Arabic-speaking counterparts, who pressure them to speak Arabic, viewing frustration with Gaza as justification to further turn their backs on Western language and culture.

NERVOUS POLICE

[1](#)3. (C) On December 31, an individual walking past the Embassy chose to express his discontent by launching insults at the U.S. and an Embassy guard. The individual was promptly detained by nearby police and later identified as an Algerian deportee from France. Beginning on January 2, the media

reported that students, clergy and private citizens at Algiers' Islamic University and at local mosques had started organizing to express their discontent about Gaza and the Israeli military campaign. Students and clergy were stopped as they marched in the streets after prayers on January 2 in the suburbs of Bir El Ater and Bordj Bou Arreridj. Those demonstrators had also expressed their intent to march to the U.S. Embassy to show their displeasure. They were turned back by the Algerian police, and several students were arrested in confrontations with police. The police then increased their presence around several areas including the Egyptian and U.S. embassies, and advised us privately to maintain our heightened security posture for several additional days.

14. (C) Representatives of the parties in the presidential alliance, as well as the Trotskyite party and the country's largest labor union (UGTA), gathered January 4 at the UGTA headquarters in central Algiers to show support for Palestinians in Gaza. The rally was not as well attended as organizers had hoped due to heavy rains, but the groups were successful in bringing in 18 mini-buses full of students to participate. The event was complicated briefly by the appearance of Ali Benhadj, one-time spiritual leader of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), along with about 20 supporters. After some shouting back and forth, Benhadj departed with plainclothes police and the rally proceeded. Separately, Benhadj announced in the media January 4 that he intended to appear in front of the U.S. Embassy to present a letter repudiating Israel's actions in Gaza. As of midday January 5, he has yet to try.

CORDONING OFF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

ALGIERS 00000018 002.2 OF 002

15. (C) To ensure that no demonstrations can reach the vicinity of the Embassy, the Algerians have again increased the numbers of police and riot equipment in the area. When a small number of protesters from the January 4 UGTA rally attempted to continue to the Embassy in their mini-buses, police were deployed to block the street at the foot of the hill about 400 meters from our main entrance. (Comment: Anger is directed at both the Algerian regime and countries such as the U.S. that are perceived as supporting Israel. As the Embassy is located near one of President Bouteflika's official residences and adjacent to his mother's residence, the Algerian authorities have focused their increased security measures in the vicinity of these facilities. End Comment.)

16. (C) During the morning on January 4, police encircled the campus of the Islamic University in the Algiers neighborhood of Kharouba in order to prevent students from leaving the campus and entering the public roadways in demonstration. It was reported that while the police blocked the exits, the students organized a sit-in and aired their grievances within the school grounds. No arrests were reported in that event.

17. (U) Point of contact for this report is DRSO Miguel A. Eversley.
PEARCE